

American

NEWS & VIEWS

A Weekly Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy

March 28, 2014

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British, U.S. Defense Leaders Discuss Ukraine, NATO

By Jim Garamone | American Forces Press Service |
27 March 2014

This article was originally published on the Defense Department website on March 26.

Washington — U.S. and United Kingdom defense leaders reiterated that there must be consequences for Russia following President Vladimir Putin's forced annexation of Crimea from Ukraine.

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel hosted British Defense Secretary Philip Hammond at the Pentagon on March 26. The two discussed a range of subjects, but the main focus was Ukraine, Hagel said at a news conference with Hammond after their meeting.

"I thanked Secretary Hammond for the U.K.'s steadfast support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and for the U.K.'s important contributions to NATO," Hagel said. "We reaffirmed the strong commitment of both our countries to NATO's collective defenses, as President Obama has emphasized throughout his trip to Europe."

Economic and diplomatic sanctions that have been imposed against Russia by the European Union and the United States will further isolate Russia, Hagel said. "As the leaders of both our countries and the other G7 nations affirmed this week in the Netherlands, we will continue to coordinate closely on future actions and sanctions we may take against Russia," he added.

Hammond said Russia's action was completely unacceptable, and he called the Russian occupation of Crimea "illegal annexation of a sovereign territory."

The United Kingdom stands with the United States and the rest of NATO in opposing the Russian action and supports "wide-ranging economic and diplomatic sanctions to force President Putin to stop his bullying behavior," Hammond said.

"The Russian government should be in no doubt that should there be further acts of aggression, there will be further consequences for Russia," he added.

Hammond confirmed that in addition to the offer of Royal Air Force Typhoon combat jets to bolster the Baltic air policing mission, the United Kingdom is working with its allies and partners on options for additional measures of reassurance to Eastern European and Baltic allies.

Hammond stated that evidence suggests that the Russian agenda is being run by Putin personally. "Other Russian

players, including [Defense] Minister [Sergei] Shoigu, may express views, but it's a moot point, and we cannot know, we do not know, to what extent all of those people are really inside the inner circle in which President Putin is planning this exercise," the British leader said.

The situation in Ukraine demonstrates the continued need for NATO, Hagel said. "The essential character and commitment of this alliance, of its 28 members to one another, remains unchanged, but we will look for new ways to collaborate and improve the alliance's capabilities and readiness," the secretary said. "That means we will make continued necessary investments in defense."

The two men and their staffs also discussed the progress of the campaign in Afghanistan.

Both countries are grappling with budget constraints, and both leaders look on this as an opportunity to explore new areas of cooperation. Hammond said the United States and United Kingdom could work together in nuclear deterrence, special operations forces, intelligence, unmanned aerial vehicles, surveillance aircraft and carrier strike regeneration.

President Obama Says No Easy Answers for Crimean Crisis

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer |
26 March 2014

Washington — President Obama told European youth that no one can know what future events in Ukraine and the Crimean region may bring, but eventually the voices for human dignity, opportunity, individual rights and the rule of law will triumph.

"The situation in Ukraine, like crises in many parts of the world, does not have easy answers nor a military solution," Obama said.

Speaking in Brussels March 26 following the U.S.-EU Summit, Obama said that the United States and Europe must not assume that the democratic progress won on the continent and advanced around the world is secure. "The contest of ideas continues," he said.

"Russia's leadership is challenging truths that only a few weeks ago seemed self-evident, that in the 21st century, the borders of Europe cannot be redrawn with force, that international law matters, that people and nations can make their own decisions about their future," Obama said.

The EU and the United States have rejected a Crimean referendum held March 16 to break away from Ukraine and seek Russian annexation, saying the referendum violated the Ukrainian Constitution, international norms

and Russia's own international obligations.

Russia's violation of international law and its assault on Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity must be condemned, Obama said. "At this moment, we must meet the challenge to our ideals — to our very international order — with strength and conviction," he added.

In the past two weeks, the United States, Europe and global allies presented a united front in supporting those ideals and in support of the Ukrainian people. European nations and the United States have worked to isolate Russia politically and economically, suspended it from the Group of Eight advanced economies and implemented reduced bilateral relations.

Sanctions were imposed. However, Obama warned that if Russia stays on its current course, the isolation and sanctions will deepen, affecting more of Russia's economy.

Earlier, while meeting at The Hague, Netherlands, the G7 major economies — the United States, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan — scrapped plans to attend the G8 summit (the G8 is the G7 plus Russia) set for Sochi, Russia, and will meet instead in Brussels.

The speech came as Obama held a meeting with NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and pledged extensive new measures to bolster NATO forces in Europe, its allies and partners. Obama also reaffirmed that the American commitment to come to the defense of NATO allies is absolute.

The president is at the midpoint of a weeklong, four-nation trip that began in the Netherlands with the third Nuclear Security Summit at The Hague and will conclude with meetings in Saudi Arabia. He met earlier in the day with Belgian King Philippe and Prime Minister Elio Di Rupo during a visit and wreath-laying ceremony at the World War I Flanders Field American Cemetery and Memorial in northwest Belgium.

Obama travels next to Rome for an audience with Pope Francis and extensive meetings with Italian officials.

Air Pollution Causing More Deaths Worldwide

26 March 2014

Washington — Air pollution causes one in every eight deaths worldwide, according to a new report from the World Health Organization (WHO) March 25. The new data more than double the previous estimate of pollution-related mortality and lend new urgency to the international efforts to reduce harmful emissions.

Both indoor and outdoor pollution contribute to the 7

million deaths cited in the WHO report, released from its Geneva headquarters. Beyond the well-established links between pollution and respiratory infections and ailments, the new findings establish a stronger connection to stroke and heart disease brought on by narrowed arteries.

"The risks from air pollution are now far greater than previously thought or understood, particularly for heart disease and strokes," said Dr. Maria Neira, director of WHO's Department for Public Health, Environment and Social Determinants of Health. "Few risks have a greater impact on global health today than air pollution."

The gray haze that obscures an urban skyline is among the most common images associated with air pollution, but pollution inside the home is just as dangerous, if not more so, according to the new findings. Indoor air pollution from cooking with wood, coal and similar fuels is linked to 4.3 million deaths — more than half the annual total.

Almost 3 billion people live in homes where food is prepared with fires using biomass materials that emit not only carbon but other toxins that can contribute to low birth weights and pneumonia in young children. The new analysis stems from better information about pollution exposures in living spaces with open fires.

"The evidence signals the need for concerted action to clean up the air we all breathe," Neira said.

The Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves — founded by U.S. government agencies and about 20 other partners in 2010 — is working toward that end. The organization, managed by the U.N. Foundation, aims to convert 100 million homes to cleaner cooking methods by 2020 with support from government, business and institutional partners around the world.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is conducting a parallel effort to evaluate clean-cookstove technologies to guide future improvements. At the same time, the EPA study is examining health effects and exposures.

"Poor women and children pay a heavy price from indoor air pollution since they spend more time at home breathing in smoke and soot from leaky coal and wood cookstoves," said Dr. Flavia Bustreo, WHO's assistant director-general of family, women and children's health.

Reducing soot emissions is a top goal of the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, founded by the United States and five partner nations in 2011. Thirty-seven governments, the European Union and more than 40 nongovernmental and international organizations have now joined the

partnership to take action against short-term pollutants. Reductions in emissions from black carbon, methane and several other gases can have a disproportionate influence on lessening atmospheric warming, research has shown.

The coalition notes a number of accomplishments in its first two years, including the establishment of an Oil and Gas Methane Partnership to work with multinational energy companies to tackle methane emissions. The coalition has also launched and funded an initiative to reduce open burning of agricultural wastes and methane emissions from livestock manure.

Domestically, the United States has taken further action to reduce emissions produced by motor vehicles. New standards announced by the EPA in early March require auto manufacturers to build cars with lower levels of tailpipe pollutants, aiming for a 25 percent reduction in emissions by 2030. The agency predicts that the action will prevent thousands of premature deaths and respiratory infections caused by air pollution, and reduce health costs.

South Sudanese Getting More Humanitarian Aid from U.S.

25 March 2014

Washington — The United States is providing nearly \$83 million in additional humanitarian assistance to the people of South Sudan affected by the recent violence, says Nancy Lindborg, USAID's assistant administrator for democracy, conflict and humanitarian assistance.

With this funding, U.S. humanitarian assistance totals nearly \$411 million for 2013 and 2014. It's aiding internally displaced people and refugees in South Sudan as well as South Sudanese who have fled to neighboring countries, USAID said in a March 25 press release.

The United States is providing nearly \$68 million to U.N. agencies such as the World Food Programme and UNICEF, nongovernmental organizations, and the International Organization for Migration to help people forced to flee their homes, according to USAID (the U.S. Agency for International Development).

U.S.-funded aid agencies will provide an additional 13,500 tons of food aid and support the distribution of critical relief supplies and services in agriculture, livelihoods, health and nutrition for the more than 708,000 people displaced in South Sudan. U.S. funding will also provide safe drinking water, latrines, and training on safe hygiene practices to prevent the spread of disease in conflict-affected areas. The funding will also bolster emergency health services, as well as medical and psychosocial support for survivors of gender-based violence and training for local health-care providers, the

agency said.

This new funding includes \$15 million for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees programs in South Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan. UNHCR, with host governments and partner organizations, is already providing assistance to the more than 250,000 refugees who have fled to neighboring countries since the December 15, 2013, onset of violence in South Sudan, USAID said.

The agency stressed that a critical component of providing humanitarian aid is the ability to reach the populations who need it.

"Amidst ongoing fighting and unpredictable security conditions, the United States and the organizations we fund are working to provide assistance to as many people in need as possible. However, this aid can only be effective if all obstacles to the delivery of life-saving assistance are removed," USAID said.

"We call on all parties to the conflict to end the violence and allow immediate, unconditional and unfettered access for the United Nations and humanitarian organizations to reach populations in need in all areas of South Sudan," the agency said.

Health Agencies Worldwide Join in World TB Day

24 March 2014

Washington — Health agencies around the world are working March 24 to raise awareness and action to combat a disease that claims a victim every 18 seconds: tuberculosis.

Just over 8.5 million people a year fall ill with TB, which is exceeded only by HIV/AIDS in the number of lives taken by a disease caused by a single infectious agent, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). About 1.3 million succumbed to the disease in 2012, and it is the leading cause of death for 20 percent of people with HIV/AIDS.

The toll of the disease is high, but it is slowly declining, and WHO reports that the fulfillment of international goals to slow the spread of the disease by 2015 are in sight.

Of the millions who fall ill each year, as many as 3 million are never seen or treated by public health systems because of isolating factors such as poverty, stigma or lack of access to a health facility. Developing better solutions to "reach the 3 million" is the theme of World TB Day 2014, and members of the StopTB Partnership aim to target better TB diagnosis, treatment, prevention and cures to these overlooked patients.

"To reach those most vulnerable, most at risk, those that are poor, weak, scared, stigmatized and alone — for this, you need additional efforts, you need innovative thinking and, beyond anything else, you need to care," said Dr. Lucica Ditiu, executive secretary of the Stop TB Partnership, in a press release. "I am happy we are having this conversation on reaching, treating and curing everyone with TB at a global level. This is what it is all about."

The partnership is highlighting the missing patients and is proposing solutions that grass-roots organizations, governments and the global community might adopt to better address the problem.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) are among the many partners addressing what is considered a global health emergency. The U.S. agencies are helping countries with high TB caseloads to expand their basic control programs, invest in research and development, and reach vulnerable populations.

The CDC is involved in collaborations to address TB in Botswana, Cambodia, China, Guyana, Ethiopia, Haiti, India, Kenya, Lesotho, Mexico, Mozambique, Peru, Philippines, Russia, Rwanda, South Africa, Thailand and Vietnam. Through the CDC Division of Tuberculosis Elimination, priorities include:

- Strengthening national TB programs in high-burden countries.
- Reducing the impact of TB among people living with HIV.
- Improving and expanding diagnosis, treatment and prevention of drug-resistant TB.
- Strengthening TB laboratory systems internationally.
- Improving infection-control practices to prevent TB transmission.

The National Institutes of Health works in biomedical and clinical research to develop vaccines and improve diagnostic methods and treatment.

USAID provides substantial support to programs building disease-fighting capabilities in developing countries.

U.S. Will Launch WTO Talks on Environmental Goods Agreement

24 March 2014

Washington — The Obama administration has announced its intent to begin negotiations on a new trade agreement in the World Trade Organization (WTO) aimed at eliminating tariffs on a wide range of environmental

goods.

U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Michael Froman notified the U.S. Congress of the administration's intention in a March 21 letter, according to a news release from his office the same day.

Earlier in 2014, at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, the United States and 13 other WTO members, accounting for 86 percent of global trade in environmental goods, announced their intention to participate in these negotiations. The members are Australia, Canada, China, Costa Rica, the European Union, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, Switzerland and Taiwan.

The negotiations will begin in Geneva as soon as each member has finalized its domestic consultation procedures.

Froman said in his notification letter that the negotiations "will build on U.S. leadership in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum on environmental goods, and maintain momentum in the WTO for the kinds of fresh, credible approaches to trade negotiation that led to success at the 9th WTO Ministerial Conference in December 2013."

At the Ninth Ministerial Conference, held in Bali, Indonesia, ministers adopted the "Bali Package," a series of decisions aimed at streamlining trade, allowing developing countries more options for providing food security, boosting least-developed countries' trade and helping development more generally. They also adopted a number of more routine decisions and accepted Yemen as a new member of the WTO.

In 2013, the United States exported \$106 billion of environmental goods, such as wind turbines, solar panels and wastewater treatment technologies. Global trade in environmental goods is estimated at nearly \$1 trillion annually. Some WTO members charge tariffs as high as 35 percent on environmental goods.

An agreement on environmental goods can "make an important contribution to the domestic and international environmental protection agenda," Froman wrote in his letter to Congress. "By eliminating tariffs on the environmental technologies we need to keep our air and water clean, for example, we can make them cheaper and more accessible to everyone."

Navy Prepares Black Box Locator for Flight 370 Search

24 March 2014

This article was originally published on the Defense Department website on March 24.

Philippine Sea — U.S. Pacific Command has ordered the U.S. Pacific Fleet to move a black box locator into the region where searchers are continuing efforts to locate Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, which disappeared March 8 shortly after leaving Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, bound for Beijing.

Officials said the order is a precautionary measure in case a debris field is located.

If a debris field is confirmed, officials said, the Navy's Towed Pinger Locator 25 will add a significant advantage in locating the missing aircraft's black box.

"In the event a debris field is located, we're moving some specialized locator equipment into the area," said Navy Commander Chris Budde, U.S. 7th Fleet operations officer. "The Towed Pinger Locator has some highly sensitive listening capability so that if the wreck site is located, we can hear the black box pinger down to a depth of about 20,000 feet. Basically, this super-sensitive hydrophone gets towed behind a commercial vessel very slowly and listens for black box pings.

"This movement is simply a prudent effort to pre-position equipment and trained personnel closer to the search area," he continued, "so that if debris is found, we will be able to respond as quickly as possible, since the battery life of the black box's pinger is limited."

If found, the acoustic signal of the pinger is transmitted up the cable, is presented audibly, and can be sent to either an oscilloscope or a signal-processing computer, 7th Fleet officials explained. The operator monitors the greatest signal strength and records the navigation coordinates. This procedure is repeated on multiple track lines until the final position is triangulated.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov>)